

Andrew Jackson to John Coffee, February 13, 1816, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO BRIGADIER-GENERAL JOHN COFFEE.¹

¹ The original letter sent is in the Tenn. Hist. Soc., Dyas Collection, Coffee MSS.

Nashville, February 13, 1816.

D'r Gen. yours of the 8th Instant was handed me yesterday by express, and I have detained him untill to day for the Eastern mail, that any letters from the department of war might be sent you, It is with much pleasure I receive the information that you have thus far progressed with the line, and that you may finish it in the shortest possible time have given you authority to raise by voluntary enlistment Twenty five men to Escort you as a guard, you will have them rationed at the contract price and I hope the [y] will be paid, but let it be understood that I am not authorised for this purpose to make the call, but being so necessary will I have no doubt be paid. I have wrote Major George Colbert stating to him the Information I have recd and informing him emphatically, "if any opposition to running the line, any insult, to you or those with you, or any depredations committed, his nation will be held responsible, and immediate punishment will be inflicted upon them. The U, States wants no land but what it has obtained by the cession from the creeks, this she is entitled to and will have; If any encroachments are made upon them, by producing proof of there having a substantial claim, the President, will afford them redress. Inform them that you are running the line, from the best information you can obtain from the Creek and cherokee chiefs, and will progress with it."

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I regret you have no other commissioner with you. But the line must be run, and that agreeably to the best information you can obtain, and I hesitate not in saying that you have run the line as favourably to the cherokees, as any information I possess would authorise. Colo. Brown having acted so Brilliant a part with us in the late war, I have no doubt the Goverment will approve your conduct, in making the offset to include him and his claim, provided it puts down all complaints and disputes as it respects our boundery with the cherokees.

You say you will, “run down the Tennessee to Caeney creek which empties itself into the river T. fifteen miles below the shoals”, This is the creek first below *cold water* , as I suppose. If so I have no doubt but your information is correct. The Creeks had a strong village on cold water from which their war parties Issued forth and harrassed this country very much on its first settlement, and continued to do so untill it was destroyed by a campaign from this quarter, about the year seventeen hundred and Eighty six, or Early in 87, part of this banditti made there Escape, and with others formed a settlement on the black warrior and continued there depredations on our country, untill they were destroyed by you, in the fall 1814. Any claim set up by the chikesaws, or choctaws to that section of country must be unfounded; The chikesaws, at that time set up no claim; they professed friendship to the whites, and all the murders, and ho[r]se stealing committed upon our citizens, were ascribed to these marauding creeks, who lived on the black warrior, always acknowledged and called creek Territory untill after you destroyed them

every person acquainted with the disposition of an Indian knows they will claim every thing and any thing—you will therefore proceed on the best information you have and can obtain from the chiefs of the Cherokees and Creeks and any other source on which you can rely and finish the line as early as Possible, and make report of it to the Goverment, with the information upon which you acted. Before doing this tho it will be well to lay before the other commissioners, the plan of the line and information upon which you proceeded and obtain there approbation and signature thereto.

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I shall set out for the Southwestern section of my Division in a few days, I await the arrival only of an engineer, and will fall in with you upon my route.² Genl Gains must be indisposed, and the other commissioner

² In January the Secretary of War sent Lieutenant James Gadsden to Jackson to select the sites which should be fortified for the protection of New Orleans, writing to Jackson Jan. 12, 1816, that Gadsden enjoyed the confidence of General Swift, then chief of engineers U. S. A. The lieutenant arrived Feb. 12 and proceeded to the duty assigned to him. May 10, 1816, he reported to Jackson that he was notified by General Swift that he was appointed chief engineer of the New Orleans district. Gadsden became one of Jackson's most loyal supporters until after the Seminole War. They never became enemies, but Gadsden, a South Carolinian, was a warm friend of Calhoun's and, ultimately, a nullifier. As Jackson gradually entered political life and took a course of his own, Gadsden, who had resigned from the army and become a planter in Florida and then in South Carolina, adhered to Calhoun.

unable to attend or they would have joined you before this. The delay that has taken place in the running of the line is shameful, you will I hope promptly execute the duty assigned you—write the commissioners from time to time, urge them to join you, and call upon them for their approbation and advice on the subject of the proposed line, and if they disapprove of the line proposed to be run by you, call upon them for a frank avowal of the same with the reasons for disagreement. . . .